

WHY BLACK OFFICERS STILL FAIL

BY

COLONEL IRVING SMITH III
United States Army

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U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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by

Colonel Irving Smith III
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Dr. James Gordon
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

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Over the past two decades U.S. War College students have written several papers touching on the experiences of black officers as they relate to representation, promotions, influence, and culture. They can best be described as a loose collection of monographs that attempted to look at social problems from a micro or meso perspective. Interestingly, only Remo Butler's paper (1996), which was one of the first to be written, has received any wide spread attention. Butler found that, "Black officers are falling behind their white counterparts in promotions at and above the rank of lieutenant colonel at a disconcerting rate." This paper is an exploration of the current state of the Black Officer in the U.S. Army. It is an analysis that uses Butler's original methods to determine what, if anything, has changed over the past fourteen years since he wrote his paper.

WHY BLACK OFFICERS STILL FAIL

A thorough review of U.S. Army War College student papers topics reveals a plethora of papers written about Black Officers in the United States Army.¹ These papers have touched on the experiences of black officers as they relate to Black officer representation in the Army, Black officer promotion rates, Black officer influence on policy and decision making, black officer sub-culture and diversity. They can best be described as loose collection of monographs that attempt to analyze social problems from a micro or meso perspective. Most of these papers have been written by Black Officers in an attempt to describe phenomena that they have seen throughout their Army careers in order to ameliorate the Army as an institution.

The Armed Forces and the Army in particular have spent a great deal of economic and intellectual capital trying to understand Black officer satisfaction, career related outcomes and other diversity related issues. Some of the interest have come because of the realization that Black officers see their world differently than other racial groups. An example of this comes from the Defense Manpower Data Center's, *Equal Opportunity Survey Report*. The principle investigators of this report found among other things that "Blacks (19%) were more likely than Whites (4%), Native Americans/Alaskan Natives (8%), and Hispanics and Asians/Pacific Islanders (13%, for both) to indicate experiencing at least one evaluation incident"² (e.g., being rated lower than expected on an evaluation) during their career. The Army has recognized the fact that there is a dearth of black officers at the general officer levels of the organization and has undertaken several diversity initiatives to address the problem. In 2003, General Eric

Shinseki, directed the formation of the Commission on Officer Diversity and Advancement in the Army (CODA).

One of CODA's major contributions was a study that was conducted in 2005 that recommended the establishment of The Army Diversity Office, which was ultimately established in 2006. This organization was followed in February 2008 by the establishment of the Army Diversity Task Force (ADTF).³ The heart of each organization's stated missions was to assess the environment and provide recommendations for how to best implement the Army's strategic diversity plan. However, even with these initiatives the problem of Black officers failing in the Army continues to persist. The ADTF submitted a report in 2008 that had four recommendations. (1) Establish a centralized HQDA diversity staff that reports directly to the Army Leadership (2) Establish a definition of Army diversity that serves all Army components (3) Establish a new diversity vision that serves all Army components and (4) Consolidate efforts of other assessments.

To date, only two of the four recommendations have been acted upon. The Army has neither established a centralized HQDA diversity staff that reports directly to the Army Leadership nor consolidated the efforts of other assessments. It seems that the Army has done a good job in terms in creating the foundations for a comprehensive diversity plan by establishing definitions and creating a vision but it has failed to follow through by creating an executable plan designed to implement enduring change.

In 2009 the Federal government also determined that opportunity for minorities was a matter of strategic importance and taking the Army's lead established the Military Leadership Diversity Commission. This commission was established under the authority

of section 596 of Public Law 110-417 and 41 CFR 1023.50(a) in 2009, "to conduct a comprehensive evaluation and assessment of policies that provide opportunities for the promotion and advancement of minority members of the Armed Forces, including minority members who are senior officers."⁴ Based on the superfluity of emphasis put on the subject one could surmise that it is indeed a strategic problem that is of utmost concern to leaders and law makers alike.

These are not new challenges. Just over 100 years ago W.E.B. DuBoise wrote, "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line, the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea."⁵ To many it may seem like a bold statement to make, particularly for an Army that has been embroiled in two wars for over eight years, but one of the greatest problems for the Army in the 21st century is still the problem of the color-line, the relation between blacks and the Army profession. In fact, General George Casey recently stated, "I started getting a sense, that because of everything going on [wars in Iraq and Afghanistan], that it caused a perception that we were done, that we had licked this already, that people weren't paying (diversity) the attention that is due."⁶

Demographics

Even though the Chief of Staff of the Army is aware of the need to continue making strides towards a diverse Army; many individuals both within and outside the Army do not see diversity as an imperative.⁷ They have complained that the federal government's interest in managing diversity is a waste of precious time and resources. In some respects the statement has some merit with regard to the inevitability of the changing demographics in the U.S. and thus the DOD and Army workforces. The workforce is and will continue to change without any internal involvement. However, as

the diversity of the workforce inevitably changes, organizations that understand and foster diversity and create cultures that allow for this diverse body to succeed will be better situated to compete in the future.

According to U.S. Census Bureau projections the U.S. will be even more racially and ethnically diverse by midcentury than it is today. Some highlights of the Census Bureau projections are listed below.⁸

- Minorities, now roughly one-third of the U.S. population, are expected to become the majority in 2042, with the nation projected to be 54 percent minority in 2050. By 2023, minorities will comprise more than half of all children.
- The non-Hispanic, single-race white population is projected to be only slightly larger in 2050 (203.3 million) than in 2008 (199.8 million). In fact, this group is projected to lose population in the 2030s and 2040s and comprise 46 percent of the total population in 2050, down from 66 percent in 2008.
- The Hispanic population is projected to nearly triple, from 46.7 million to 132.8 million during the 2008-2050 period. Its share of the nation's total population is projected to double, from 15 percent to 30 percent. Thus, nearly one in three U.S. residents would be Hispanic.
- The black population is projected to increase from 41.1 million, or 14 percent of the population in 2008, to 65.7 million, or 15 percent in 2050.
- The Asian population is projected to climb from 15.5 million to 40.6 million. Its share of the nation's population is expected to rise from 5.1 percent to 9.2 percent.

These data underscore the fact that changing demographics coupled with propensity to serve will have a profound effect on recruitment and retention for many years to come. As stated earlier in this paper, many officers have seen these changes and have written about them in U.S. Army War College papers over the last two decades.

The Problem

Many including Charles Moskos and John Sibley Butler have suggested that the Army is a meritocracy and is at the forefront of diversity efforts. In fact, Moskos and Butler go so far as to state, “It is the only place in American life where whites are routinely bossed around by blacks.”⁹ They and others who espouse this point of view routinely point out three facts. The first is that the Army was one of the first institutions to integrate blacks and whites in the U.S. with the introduction of President Harry Truman’s Executive Order 9981.¹⁰ The second is that blacks have risen to the highest levels of command in the United States Military including being the Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Colin Powell). Finally, they point to the fact that a Black man has risen to the rank of Commander in Chief (President Barrack Obama). While these points are immutable it is also true that the second and third points are the anomaly.

Moskos and Butler described an Army that they saw as an ideal for African Americans. In their vision, the Army was a place where African-Americans could rise to the highest levels of an inclusive organization that valued their unique cultural perspective. However, at the same time that Moskos and Butler came to the conclusion that Army was akin to a utopia, Colonel Remo Butler, a student at the U.S. Army War College came to a very different conclusion. He believed that Black officers were not living in a utopia: they were failing. He stated, “Black officers are falling behind their

white counterparts in promotions at and above the rank of lieutenant colonel at a disconcerting rate.”¹¹

My analysis of the evidence presented, in both works, leads me to believe that the Army has done a good job in providing African-Americans in the Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) and enlisted ranks a fantastic opportunity to grow, develop and prosper. However, Black officers appear to have structural barriers that they were not able to overcome when Remo Butler wrote his treatise in 1996 which continue to persist today. In other words, Black officers are still failing.

Several papers have been written at the U.S. Army War College over the past twenty years which are a testament to the fact that there is a perceived problem from the Black officer perspective with regard to Black officer professional mobility. More poignantly stated, black officers feel as though there are structural barriers to their advancement in the military. Colonel Anthony Reyes sums up the evidence as follows:

While Blacks make up 22 percent of the Army overall, they comprise only 12.3 percent of the officer corps and between seven and eight percent of the combat arms officers. The combat arms branches are of particular importance because they represent the predominant pipeline to the senior ranks of the Army. Of the 318 current general officers, 59 percent are from combat arms branches, 13 percent are from combat support, 12 percent are from combat service support, and the remaining 16 percent are divided among other branches.¹²

In short, African Americans are less likely to make the rank of general officer, among other reasons, because they do not come from branches that have traditionally been the breeding grounds from which general officers are selected.

Interestingly, only BG (ret) Remo Butler’s paper, has received any wide spread attention in the Army at large. Writing just after a significant draw down in the Army, BG (ret) Butler, in a later version of his paper, found that the cause for black officers falling

behind their White peers was, “a debilitating inertia in the way young black officers are mentored and a lack of common cultural understanding among both black and white officers.”¹³ As a result of his observational analysis and a simple convenience survey that he conducted at the U.S. Army War College at Carlisle, PA, he determined that the path to correct this deficiency was fourfold: (1) Minimize the workings of the old boy network to get young Black officers quality assignments (2) Increase the quality of ROTC cadre by increasing the status of ROTC assignments (3) Provide quality mentoring for young Black officers and (4) Educate officers and senior leaders in cultural awareness. Many of the initiatives that the Army developed were a result of Butler shedding light and perspective on the problem. Butler’s recommendations were well received at the time. My evidence of this is that it was mandatory reading for many units in the late 1990’s. However, the question today is what steps were taken as result of Butler’s recommendations and what effect did they have on the Army and Black Officer career progression?

This paper is an extension of Butler’s paper in that it seeks to determine what if anything has changed in the fourteen years since Butler published his paper in 1996. My working hypothesis for this paper is that little has changed and that African-Americans are “still” failing in today’s Army.

Remo Butler suggested that Black officers were failing in two areas (1) promotion to the ranks of LTC and higher and (2) selection for battalion and brigade command. In order to determine if Blacks are still failing I used the same methodology as Butler did in 1996.

Comparisons

The first set of data that Butler extrapolated was the number of blacks serving in the Army. According to Butler, in 1994, blacks made up 27% of the Army and 11% of the officer corps. Today blacks make up 19.8% of the Army¹⁴ and 12 % of the officer corps. In terms of the percentage of Black officers in the Army not much has changed. Butler next set out to compare the numbers of officers by race and rank, in terms of black and white non-Hispanics. The comparison between Butler's figures and latest available data is illustrated in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Remo Butler 1996

Rank	White non-Hispanic		Black non-Hispanic	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
General Officer	307	91.6%	22	6.6%
Colonel	3,460	90.9%	185	4.9%
Lieutenant Colonel	7,951	86.6%	762	8.3%
Major	11,713	80.7%	1,812	12.5%
Captain	21,111	80.1%	3,258	12.4%
1st Lieutenant	7,027	79.0%	1,135	12.8%
2d Lieutenant	7,453	81.0%	927	10.1%

Table 1.¹⁵

In 1996 Butler noted that blacks tended to constitute about 12% of the officer corps through the rank of Major but that percentage dropped off precipitously at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Furthermore, he found that whites had an opposite trend in that their numbers increased all the way through the rank of general officer. My findings are similar to Butlers; however there are some caveats.

The first difference is that blacks now represent 12% of the officer corps through the rank of lieutenant colonel as opposed to major. The second difference is that there

is a precipitous increase in the percentage of Black colonels. Another difference is that the percentage of White officers increases through the rank of General, however, the percentages are much lower than when Butler reported in 1996. There are several plausible explanations for these differences. The most obvious of these is the difference in selection rates in 1994 versus 2007. In 1995 the selection rate for the 1985 cohort to

Irving Smith 2009				
Rank	White non-Hispanic		Black non-Hispanic	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
General Officer	293	84.9%	23	6.7%
Colonel	3661	82.7%	453	10.2%
Lieutenant Colonel	7,668	78.5%	1,192	12.2%
Major	11,627	74.0%	1,984	12.6%
Captain	19,009	69.6%	3,553	13.0%
1st Lieutenant	5,713	71.0%	1,059	13.2%
2d Lieutenant	7,196	69.8%	1,311	12.7%

Table 2.¹⁶

Major was 62%.¹⁷ By 2007, as a result of the need for an increased number of officers to fight two wars, the selection rate had ballooned to 91%¹⁸ and officers were being promoted earlier as well.¹⁹ With regard to the decreased number of white officers in the Army, a plausible explanation is the fact that other minorities have had a greater propensity to serve. Asians, Hispanics, and Other officers have been commissioned at much higher rates since 1994.²⁰

Table 3 illustrates the percent change in the number of officers at a particular rank by race. The only percentage that has increased for White officers is number of Colonels while all of the numbers for black officers have increased with exception of the number of first lieutenants which decreased by 6.7%. This table makes the precipitous increase in the number of Black colonels even more apparent, while simultaneously

drawing attention to the relatively small increase in the number of Black generals. One of the statistics that Butler did not consider was the ratio of second lieutenants to general officers. In 1994 the ratio would have been 4.1% of White officers and 2.4% of Black officers. In 2007 this ratio had hardly changed for White officers 4.1% but had dipped to 1.8% for Black officers. Based on this data one could hypothesize that Butler would characterize the changes which have occurred since 1996 as encouraging or at the very least a step in the right direction. However, one might also surmise that he would suggest that Black officers are still failing to achieve the very highest ranks in the Army i.e. that Black Officers are indeed still failing. Dr. Darlene Iskra described the phenomenon whereby some groups fail to achieve upward professional mobility in the military as a “Brass Ceiling.”²¹ In light of the data above, one might surmise that Black officers do indeed have a brass ceiling.

% Change in number by Rank and Race (Butler vs Smith)		
Rank	White	Black
General Officer	-4.56%	4.55%
Colonel	5.81%	144.9%
Lieutenant Colonel	-3.6%	56.4%
Major	-0.7%	9.5%
Captain	-10.0%	9.1%
1st Lieutenant	-18.7%	-6.7%
2d Lieutenant	-3.4%	41.4%

Table 3.

For Remo Butler part of the problem was the pipeline. He reasoned that the fewer the number of officers selected at a lower rank the fewer the officers left in the population to compete at the next higher rank. For example if a year group hypothetically consisted of 100 second lieutenants and only 75% of them were

promoted to first lieutenant then there would only be 75 available to be considered for captain. Whereas if 90% of them were promoted to second lieutenant then there would be 90 who could potentially be promoted to captain. When these cuts are factored in all the way to the rank of colonel one can see how the pipeline might be very small if blacks are systematically being eliminated from the promotable pool. In order to conduct an analysis of this phenomenon he conducted an analysis of selection rates from captain through the field grade ranks for year groups 1973 and 1974 (see table 4). He selected these year groups because they were students at the U.S. Army War College when he wrote his paper. His findings matched what he found in the first part of his analysis: that Blacks were falling behind at the rank of major.

	Year Group 1973		Year Group 1974	
	Overall select %	Black select %	Overall select %	Black select %
CPT	95.5	92.8	91.1	88.4
MAJ	79	72.9	78	66.9
LTC	61.4	65.6	60.5	61.7
COL	42.8	41	Unavailable	

Table 4.

In order to understand how things have progressed in terms of selection rates to field grade officer ranks I followed Butler's methodology. I selected year groups 1986 and 1987 which make up a good percentage of the officers currently at the War College. Butler's analysis of this data led him to believe that selection rates from captain to major was a key problem in getting Black officers to the senior ranks of the Army. Specifically, in both year groups 1973 and 1974 the overall selection rates were much higher than black selection rates: 6% higher for year group 1973 and 11% higher for year group

1974. To Butler, the fact that selection rates were different was the genesis of the pipeline issue discussed earlier. Table 5 shows Butler's data.

In my analysis of year groups 1986 and 1987 I found the same observable fact. Black officers in these year groups were selected at much lower rates than their cohort peers. In fact, for year group 1986 the difference was 14% and for year group 1987 the difference was 8%. In the aggregate the differences in Butler's sample population were smaller than the differences in my population. At the rank of colonel the numbers converge. For Butler and year group 1973 the difference between Blacks and the rest of the cohort was only 1.8 percentage points. Although there was little difference in the promotion rates to colonel there was a large substantive difference in the number of officers ultimately selected. The 42.8% for white officers resulted in 455 officers being promoted while the 41% of Black officers being selected only resulted in 48 officers ultimately being promoted. This was the essence of Butler's pipeline theory.

Similarly for year group 1986, the year group that I selected, the difference was only two percentage points with Blacks having the higher rates of promotion. Interestingly, I found the same trend as Butler. Although the percentages worked out to be relatively close between Black officers and the rest of the cohort, the substantive number of officers promoted was much less than one might expect. For example, White officers in this year group had a 53.1% selection rate to colonel. Of the 768 eligible White officers 408 were ultimately selected. Of the 98 Black officers eligible for promotion 54 were ultimately selected. It is clear that Butler's conception of the constricting pipeline was at play for this year group as well. Butler never conducted an analysis of the ratio of the number of officers who began with the year group to the

number who ultimately were selected for colonel because the data were not available to him.²²

Butler's analysis did not end with his analysis of the above statistics. They were merely a starting point for his primary contention that the dearth of officers at the junior field grade ranks, i.e. major and lieutenant colonel, made it almost impossible for there to be any significant number of general officers. He also believed that those who made it to the ranks of lieutenant colonel and colonel were being selected for command designated positions at lower rates as well. In 1996 Butler reasoned that the gateway to promotion to colonel was battalion command. Today, battalion command is no longer a prerequisite for promotion to colonel but those who are selected for battalion command certainly have a greater likelihood of being selected for promotion to colonel than those who do not.

Furthermore, those who are selected for battalion and brigade command are much more likely to ascend to the rank of general officer. In order to test his command selection hypothesis, Butler gathered lieutenant colonel command designated position list (CDPL) board selection rates for Black and White officers for fiscal years 1993 through 1995. Table 5 illustrates Butler's original data.

Fiscal Year	Selection Rate, Whites	Selection Rate, Blacks
1993	13.86%	12.06%
1994	12.66%	8.43%
1995	12.44%	5.54%

Table 5.

Butler's analysis of the data suggested that Blacks had a much lower selection rate than whites across the board. He thus reasoned that this automatically put Blacks at a disadvantage for promotion to colonel. Following Butler's line of year group selection, I moved the clock twelve years forward and selected Fiscal Years 2005, through 2007 to conduct the same analysis in order to determine whether or not there had been any changes.²³ Table 6 illustrates the data for these Fiscal Years.

Fiscal Year	Selection Rate, Whites	Selection Rate, Blacks
2005	26.98%	30.24%
2006	25.84%	18.69%
2007	23.07%	14.96%

Table 6.

As one can see, these data bear out the fact that there is still a disparity between black and white selection rates for the CDPL at the lieutenant colonel level. Not only are these results substantively different for Fiscal years 2006 and 2007, the differences are statistically significant ($P<.01$).²⁴ The differences for Fiscal year 2007 were not statistically significant. Based on this analysis one might conclude that White officers still get selected at significantly higher rates than Blacks.²⁵

Discussion

It is clear from the data presented in this paper that although there has been some progress since the time that Remo Butler wrote his thesis, Black officers are indeed still failing, based on the criteria that Butler established in 1996. The question is why has there been so little progress for Black Officers over this period? It would be hard for anyone to deny that the Army as an institution has made a valiant attempt to

institute programs and adopt policies that allow Black officers to thrive within a meritocratic system. It would also be difficult to blame the victim and suggest that Black officers are doing something to keep themselves from reaching the highest levels. In order to make sense of why so little progress has been made in the interlude between 1996 and 2010 it is necessary to look at what Butler defined as the four root causes of the problem: education, mentorship, culture and the good old boy network.

Education

By education Butler simply meant that Black Officers were not getting a quality undergraduate military experience. He reasoned that most Black Officers were being commissioned through ROTC units from Historically Black Colleges and Universities and were not socialized properly to understand some of the idiosyncrasies of an institution dominated by White officers. In fact, he stated that Black Officers commissioned through West Point more often than not, did better than their Black peers commissioned through ROTC programs. The reason for these differences was not the education, but the level of professionalism of the officers serving at those institutions. He felt that the best and brightest officers were serving at West Point and that ROTC programs were therefore left with lower performing officers to educate young black officers who were already at a disadvantage. His evidence was that many of the officers who teach at West Point were ultimately selected for Battalion command while very few of the ROTC officers were selected.

Since the time that Butler's paper was published, there have been some changes in this respect; however, the preponderance of his premise still rings true. One change which has not helped develop Black officers (or officers in general) is the use of contractors to run ROTC programs. Although active Lieutenant Colonels or Colonels still

serve as Professors of Military Science in ROTC programs, many of the Senior Military Science Instructors, Military Science Instructors, Administrative Technicians, and Staff Specialists are contracted by Communications Technologies Inc. (COMTEK). The COMTEK contracted officers must be a retired or former active component or a retired or serving Reserve or National Guard Army officer.²⁶ ROTC cadets now get much of their exposure to and understanding about the military profession from these contractors. On the contrary West Point cadets get their exposure to and understanding of Army values from a hand selected cadre of active duty officers who all have at least a Master's degree. Therefore, in the aggregate, Black officers who are commissioned through ROTC, are probably not being exposed to the same quality of officer as those commissioned through West Point. Therefore, Remo Butler's education hypothesis may still be a very large part of the problem.

Mentorship

Butler also believed that Blacks were not getting the type of mentorship that they needed to be successful in the Army. More specifically, he felt that junior Black officers did not have enough senior Black role models to help them grow professionally in the Army. Although he states that "mentoring should be color-blind," he concedes that a successful Black Officer may be better able to relate to junior Black officers and therefore have better success in the mentorship process. In order to prove his point, Butler used anecdotes from his classmates in the U.S Army War College class of 1996. Moreover, the fact that there is a dearth of senior black officers means that are fewer potential mentors in the system. Much like when Butler wrote his thesis, the anecdotal information that I received from my classmates in the USAWC Class of 2010 was similar to the information that Butler received. Whites tended to say that they had one or

two Black officers who were really good and that those officers tended to be West Point graduates. They also implied that junior Black officers were as technically and tactically proficient as the White junior officers, but they (the senior White officer) had to work hard to get to know the junior Black Officers. Others who have opined on this topic have come to the same conclusion. In a 2008 Strategy Research Project Paper, while discussing ethnocentrism and its effects on work experiences and career outcomes Colonel Florentino “Lopez” Carter stated, “there is not a conscious effort on the part of leaders to exclude minorities but rather a recognition that certain innate human tendencies affect how leaders are more apt to mentor member[s] of his/her own phenotype.”²⁷

Many of the Black officers in the same USAWC (2010) suggested that they did mentor junior black officers but they themselves had few Black mentors along the way. I spoke with many White officers who had never had a Black mentor or immediate supervisor during their entire career in the Army. The implication of this is that there may still be a black-white divide in the Army that manifests itself in the social relations and thus the development of the contemporary Army officer.

Culture

One of the most controversial arguments that Remo Butler made was the argument that Blacks and Whites in the U.S. have different cultures and that these different cultures manifest themselves in everyday military life. In order to add context to his assertion he used anecdotal evidence from his own experience in the Army and that provided by his USAWC classmates with regard to dress, music, and social events. He believed that blacks grow up with a set of cultural mores that are different than those of white's and radically different than that of the white dominated military. For example, he

suggested that the expected mode of dress for officers at civilian functions is a pair of Khaki pants, collared shirt and loafers. Although he did not state it explicitly, Butler suggested that blacks do not generally dress in this manner and thus had to learn this behavior or be ostracized. According to Butler, these differences are a system of cultural mores which must be learned by blacks if they are to succeed in the military. He went on to reflect that blacks don't learn about these cultural imperatives unless they are commissioned at West Point or a white dominated ROTC commissioning source.

Although Butler's line of reasoning still makes sense in today's world, many things have changed since the early 90's. Most of the USAWC students that I spoke with believe that the cultural gap between Black and White youth is smaller than it once was. They all pointed to the fact that today's youth, both white and black, tend to be attracted to rap music and wear similar styles of dress. However, the scholarly research in this area does not appear to be nearly as update about the gap closing. In 2002, the National Endowment of the Arts reported that Whites were three times as likely as Blacks to attend a classical music performance, opera or ballet or even watch them on TV.²⁸ In any event, there is not enough research to ascertain whether the cultural gap that Remo Butler spoke about has grown or shrunk, but there is little doubt that it still exists to some degree and is probably still a part of the reason that Black officers still fail.

Good Old Boy Network

The shortest explanation that Remo Butler provided for why Black officers fail was the good old boy network. In fact, he only spent one paragraph on this topic. He believed that the pervasive notion that it is all about who you know was a key component to why Black officers fail. He reasoned that Black officers who had few

mentors and little social interaction with senior Black or White officers were less likely to be selected for Battalion S-3 and XO positions. As a result, they were less likely to be selected for command and ultimately for the rank of general officer. It is my belief that the good old boy network is still alive and well. In my conversations with my peers, both black and white, I found that they universally believed that who you know is as important as individual performance and potential, especially as one gets more senior in rank. Particularly interesting was the fact that I heard the same story several times over about being selected to be on a certain staff because they knew the commander. In essence, Remo Butler's notion of the old boy network is still important in understanding why Black officers still fail.

Conclusion

Although one would like to believe that the Army has progressed to a point in its history where race is no longer a factor in the success or failure of individual service members, one could argue that it has not yet reached this point. Based on my review of the current data one could argue that not much has changed since Remo Butler wrote his thesis in 1996 and that Black Officers are still failing. Not only are Black officers still failing, but it does not appear that we have made much progress in the areas that Remo Butler described as the root causes of the problem: education, mentorship, culture and the good old boy network.

As a result, I suggest that we take a new approach to increasing the potential for Black Officers to reach the most senior levels of our Army. Many have argued that there must be a top down approach if we are make strides in this endeavor. John Kotter a well known expert in the field of organizational change stated, "Major change is often said to be impossible unless the head of the organization is an active supporter."²⁹

Therefore, the advice that I offer as a solution to the problem is directed to senior officers charged with improving the Army's diversity.

The first recommendation is that we need to move beyond managing diversity to having a diversity execution strategy. The development of CODA and the subsequent creation of the Army Diversity Office is a step in the right direction. However, even these well intentioned organizations have only succeeded in creating more rhetoric and documents that have had little to no effect on Blacks reaching the top levels of the Army. Furthermore, it is very apparent that the Army's rank and file is not buying into the diversity initiatives as they are currently executed. Black officers believe that our diversity efforts are ineffective and many White officers feel as though these initiatives work against them. They only thing that the two groups can agree on is that diversity training is a waste of time. This is not just an Army problem, but a problem a corporate problem as well.

Mandatory diversity seminars or training programs can encounter just as much eye-rolling resistance from Black executives as from white. It is not that they do not support the goal. But the general consensus is that it is going to be a waste of time. Even if everyone herded in the room agrees the goal is something that they all should care about, the didactic tone usually accompanying that process makes the participants feel as if they are being forced to eat vegetables.³⁰

Diversity initiatives cannot exist as standalone programs if they are to be effective. They must be integrated into and aligned with the organizations overall strategic plan.

Senior leaders must communicate why diversity is important. The Army has not clearly communicated why diversity is important. There are two points that our senior leaders must make perfectly clear. The first is that our diversity is linked to our performance as an institution. The research on diversity with respect to complex tasks and group performance is ambiguous. Some have found that demographic diversity

produces few if any benefits to group performance.³¹ Others have found that demographic diversity increases group performance.³² In any event, if there is *any* chance that diversity increases organizational performance or mission accomplishment then the Army must embrace it. The situations that our Army faces today are complex problems that require cognitive diversity which springs from cultural diversity. Second, as a public institution, the Army should look like its host society. In the end, an institution that is representative of its host society, at all ranks, and displays a high level of competence will have the support of the American people.

The Army must have a set of quantitative and qualitative criteria that allow it to measure the impact of its diversity efforts. I agree in this respect with Representative Elijah Cummings in this respect. In a letter to the Secretary of the Army, Representative Cummings stated,

While the Army has made a good faith effort to address areas of minority underrepresentation, more aggressive steps are needed in order to achieve a fully diverse force and capitalize on the strength of this diversity. timeframe [sic] the Army has yet to identify concrete metrics to capture performance progress. Having addressed this issue for the past three years, the Army should be able to provide tangible results as a true measure of the leadership's commitment to institutionalizing diversity into the culture through their effective and efficient practices.³³

Furthermore, these criteria must be tied to senior officer performance appraisals. If senior officers are held accountable through their performance appraisals the entire organization will have little choice but to get on board. Many senior leaders will balk at this as an attempt to foster affirmative action or an action that will put unqualified officers into positions of increased responsibility and therefore decrease the effectiveness of the Army. However, I advocate finding qualified officers who meet the qualifications for the positions they are being considered for. These individuals exist in

large numbers in our Army and it is a senior leadership obligation to find, develop and mentor them if we are to ever make any advancement in this endeavor.

The Army must select the right people to lead its diversity office. The right people are those who have the right education, level of experience, knowledge of the organization and passion to do the job. Those with the right education would include sociologists, cultural anthropologists, and social-psychologists to name a few.

Furthermore, those selected to lead the diversity enterprise should have a firm understanding of organizational culture and leading organizations through change. It seems as if the Army has taken the position that if we take Black officers who have been successful and get them to run our diversity initiatives then we will be successful in pursuit of diversity goals. A cursory look at the list of officers assigned to the CODA reveals a list of successful Black Officers who worked on the panel. However, these officers in many cases are no more qualified to lead a diversity study or enterprise than a White Officer with similar credentials. Cora Daniels, a teaching professional at New York University, sums it nicely by stating, “Basically there is no barrier to entry. It requires no degree, no verification process, and no common credential for people to claim to be diversity gurus. Virtually anyone can hang up a shingle and proclaim their expertise.”³⁴

The Army must develop a talent management enterprise. This is an enterprise, fashioned after many of the top civilian firm enterprises designed to find the organization’s best talent; ensure that they get the right assignments and provide career advice and mentorship. It has been well documented that many Blacks enter the service in order to gain skills for use in the civilian sector. Once they have gained these skills

and fulfilled their service obligations they will leave unless they see the Army as a value adding proposition to their lives. We must establish an office designed to monitor, provide career guidance, and ensure that these individuals get the assignments that they need to be successful. In essence, the Army must have an ongoing, strategic process for identifying and developing a diverse pool of Black officer talent. The tangible result will be a larger pool of qualified, Black and White officers, who are eligible to serve at the executive levels of the Army.

The Army must force its senior Black officers to have a stake in the development of its junior Black officers. In order to make this a reality the Army's senior leadership must do three things. First, senior leadership must ask senior Black officers what they are doing to mentor junior Black officers. Many White officers will naturally feel uncomfortable asking this question; however, it is important for senior Black officers to know that this is an imperative. Moreover, people pay attention to what the boss pays attention to. Second, senior leadership must weed out those Black officers who are unwilling to step up to this challenge. There are some senior Black officers who feel no obligation to mentor junior Black officers. They are what Nathan Hare described as the Black Anglo-Saxons, Blacks who have "made it" but for some reason have become disconnected from their race.³⁵ Senior officers must hold them accountable by asking the question, "what are you doing to help with the problem?" Finally, the Army's senior leadership must place those who are willing to make a difference in the right positions so that they can have an impact. This includes executive command level positions as well as administrative positions that will expose them to those who can benefit most from their example, mentorship and passion.

In this paper I attempted to determine what if anything has changed since Remo Butler wrote his thesis in 1996. The findings overall suggest that today Black officers are getting promoted to the ranks of lieutenant colonel and colonel at higher levels than in 1996. Furthermore, Blacks are being selected for both battalion and brigade levels command at higher rates than 1996. However, Blacks are still failing to rise to the strategic decision making levels of the Army. In trying to come to grips with this I have found that there are some limitations to this paper. The first is that this study does not employ a rigorous methodological approach to understanding senior officer perceptions. Instead it relies on anecdotal evidence, like Butler's thesis, to support the contentions herein. Additionally, like Butler's paper, this paper takes a myopic black – white approach to understanding why Black officers fail. It is very apparent after reviewing the initial data that the problem must be examined from a wider perspective. More specifically, the growth of the Asian and Hispanic officer populations have to be factored into the equation. In some respects the number of general officer positions is a fixed pie and therefore every position that goes to a Hispanic or Asian officer is one that cannot be filled by a Black officer. In effect it is a zero sum game. A more comprehensive approach would consider all others and control for variables like geographic region of origin, parental education levels, and parental service to name a few. Ultimately, by examining the data in this paper and addressing its limitations we may be able to make strides in understanding how to increase the overall diversity of the Army in order to make it more effective.

Endnotes

¹ All of the Strategy Research Projects written by United States Army War College students can be accessed at <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/> .

² Jacquelyn Scarville, Scott B. Button, Jack E. Edwards, Anita R. Lancaster, and Timothy W. Elig. "Armed Forces Equal Opportunity Survey," August 1999, Defense Manpower Data Center, <http://prhome.defense.gov/eo96exsum.html> .

³ 2009 Army Posture Statement, "Diversity," http://www.army.mil/aps/09/information_papers/diversity.html (accessed October 14, 2009).

⁴ "Establishment of Department of Defense Federal Advisory Committees" 74 Federal Register 15 (26 January 2009), pp. 4377 – 4380.

⁵ W.E.B. Du Boise, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Company, 1903), 9.

⁶ J.D. Leipold, "Gen. Casey Announces Creation of Diversity Task Force," December 3, 2007, <http://www.army.mil/-news/2007/12/03/6405-gen-casey-announces-creation-of-diversity-task-force/> (accessed February 20, 2010).

⁷ Rick Santorum, "The Elephant in the Room: Diversity, But at What Cost?," *The Philadelphia Enquirer*, November 19, 2009. <http://www.philly.com/inquirer/opinion/70444222.html>, (accessed March 4, 2010).

⁸ Robert Bernstein and Tom Edwards, "An Older and More Diverse Nation by Midcentury," August 14, 2008, <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/012496.html>, (accessed February 20, 2010).

⁹ Charles C. Moskos and John Sibley Butler, *All That We Can Be: Black Leadership And Racial Integration The Army Way*, (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 2.

¹⁰ Harry Truman, *Executive Order 9981*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/photos/9981a.jpg> (accessed March 2, 2010). President Truman's Executive Order 9981, did not end segregation or begin integration it more generally declared, "equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin."

¹¹ Remo Butler, *Why Black Officers Fail*, Strategy Research Project (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, Autumn 1996), ii.

¹² Anthony D. Reyes, "Strategic Options for Managing Diversity in the U.S. Army," June 2006, <https://www.deomi.org/DiversityMgmt/documents/DiversityArmy2006.pdf> (accessed October 14, 2009).

¹³ Remo Butler, "Why Black Officers Fail," *Parameters* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 1999): 54. <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/USAWC/PARAMETERS/99autumn/butler.htm> (accessed March 4, 2010).

¹⁴ Remo Butler never clarified whether his numbers were based on the total Army or just the active component.

¹⁵ Deputy Director, U.S. Army Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis (OEMA), MAJ David S. Lyle (Unofficial for LTC Irving Smith) 6 October 2009.

¹⁶ Deputy Director, U.S. Army Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis (OEMA), MAJ David S. Lyle (Unofficial for LTC Irving Smith) 6 October 2009.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Reserve Component Readiness, http://www.army.mil/aps/08/reserve_component_readiness/reserve_component_readiness.html (accessed August 31, 2009).

¹⁹ Charles A. Henning, *Army Officer Shortages: Background and Issues for Congress*, in CRS Report for Congress, July 5, 2006, 10. <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33518.pdf> (accessed March 4, 2010).

²⁰ Remo Butler's paper was written in 1996; however, his data were taken from the DSCPER-441, Racial Statistical by REDCAT Grade Quarter Ending September 1994.

²¹ When speaking about women and their lack of opportunity to reach the highest ranks in the Department of Defense Dr. Darlene Iskra dubbed this phenomenon as a "Brass Ceiling." Darlene M. Iskra, *Breaking Through the Brass Ceiling*, (Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller Aktiengesellschaft & Co. KG, 2008).

²² Remo Butler, "Why Black Officers Fail In the U.S. Army," Autumn 1996, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA309248&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf> (accessed August 31, 2009).

²³ In keeping with the methodology used in the previous section it would have been more advantageous to move forward thirteen years instead of twelve. However, at the time the data for Fiscal Year 2008 was not available.

²⁴ In order to conduct the test for significance I used the Z-Test for independent groups to determine if they were significantly different from one another.

²⁵ I conducted an analysis to see if Fiscal Year 2005, the year that Blacks had higher selection rates than Whites, was an outlier and found that there have been two other Fiscal Years in which Blacks had higher selection rates on CDPLs. Those years were 1998 and 2001.

²⁶ *The Communication Technologies (COMTEK), Inc .ROTC Page*, <http://www.comtechnologies.com/>, (accessed February 26, 2010).

²⁷ Florentino Carter, Applying a Cultural Diversity Metric to the Selection of Armor Brigade Command Selectees, Strategy Research Project (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, March 15, 2008), 12.

²⁸ The Black Wide Divide in Cultural Pursuits, The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, http://www.jbhe.com/news_views/58_cultural_divide.html (accessed February 8, 2010).

²⁹ John P. Kotter, *Leading Change*, (Boston: Harvard Business School Press), 6.

³⁰ Cora Daniels, *Black Power Inc.: The New Voice of Success*, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2004), 89.

³¹ Lisa Hope Pelled, Kathleen M. Eisenhardt, and Katherine R. Xin, "Exploring the Black Box: An Analysis of Work Group Diversity, Conflict, and Performance," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (March 1999): 23.

³² Pamela Tudor, "Adding Value with Diversity: What Business Leaders Need to Know," 6, <http://www.aimd.org/files/PamelaTudor.pdf> (accessed February 22, 2010).

³³ Elijah Cummings, 24 June 2009; quoted in Lawrence Sellin, "Outside View: Is Diversity an Army Euphemism?," UPI.com, 18 November 2009, linked from UPI.com at "Analysis," http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Analysis/2009/11/18/Outside-View-Is-diversity-an-Army-euphemism/UPI-83691258560000/ (accessed February 20, 2010).

³⁴ Cora Daniels, *Black Power Inc.: The New Voice of Success*, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2004), 86-87.

³⁵ Nathan Hare, *The Black Anglo-Saxons*, 2nd ed., (Chicago: Third Word Press, 1991).

